



T A M M E R A M A R T

**SURROUNDED  
BY THE  
ENEMY**

A WWII Short Story

## Surrounded By the Enemy

by Tammera Ayers, as told by Richard Spicer

“Why haven’t I gotten my papers?” I asked the draft officer. I had just graduated from high school and knew if I got to Europe, I could win this world war for America.

“Go back home, son. You’ll hear from us.”

I didn’t wait long. Soon, I was on Omaha Beach, a private Patton’s Third Army, helping push the Germans out of France.

Soon after I arrived, we received new M-1 rifles. We stacked these every evening at suppertime. One evening, I picked up the last rifle. Strange, this was not my gun. It wasn’t new. I shrugged it off.

The next morning, rain pelted down as our company crossed a river into battle. I carried a bazooka, while another officer hauled the rockets. We were under fire as soon as the raft hit shore. Throughout the day, we flushed the Germans out of pillboxes, dug foxholes, and pushed the enemy back. But as we prepared to stand our ground, we learned of a counterattack and were ordered to retreat.

Slowed by the weight of the bazooka, I tried to climb a wet slope and fell behind. The Germans behind me did not slow down. Unable to reach my company, I climbed into a foxhole. The bazooka was useless without rockets. My only defense against the three Germans was my rifle and one hand grenade. I aimed the rifle, but a water bubble stuck in the peephole. I blew out the bubble, then fired the gun. Click. Nothing happened. I frantically fired again. Nothing. The gun was jammed.

I yanked out the clip. My hand shook as I fit a single shell in the barrel. I lifted the gun. It fired, and I shot one man. I fed the gun another bullet and hit a second man, but I was too slow—the Germans were closing in. Yanking the grenade out of my shirt, I pulled the pin, but it was too late. A soldier held his gun against my head and ordered me to toss the grenade. I joined the German soldiers and a captured American medic.

A young German boy lay wounded on a makeshift stretcher. A soldier pointed at the boy, the medic, and me. Then he pointed to another German company across a field ablaze with

American artillery fire. I knew we couldn't make it across that field carrying their wounded soldier. I was sick, knowing my own men would shoot me down.

Grabbing one end of the stretcher, I yelled to the medic, "We'll run to the edge of the field, hit the ground, and I'll pray the twenty-third psalm. Then we'll run for it."

We ran, hunkered down at the edge of the field, and I fervently prayed, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall lack nothing... Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me..."

We got up, ran across the field, climbed a fence, and arrived panting at a company of German soldiers. I don't know what that German boy said, but I think he told them not to hurt us. They ordered me into a sedan and took me to a small French village, leaving me with American POWs. But I didn't stay there. An officer took me to another village. We stepped into an enormous barn with German soldiers everywhere. I suspected they waited for orders of a counterattack.

I fell into a pile of hay. A soldier approached, and I thought he would order me up, but he tossed a blanket over me. I slept through the night. In the morning, they brought in jam and sourdough bread. One man threw me a pocketknife and motioned towards the jam. "Put that on your bread and eat it." After we ate, I fell asleep again. When I awoke, someone had thrown an overcoat over me.

Soon after, the man who shared his pocketknife put me in a cattle stall. "They're gonna search you. If you let me hold your valuables, I'll make sure you get them back."

I didn't believe him. But feeling I had no choice, I handed him my gold class ring and the watch my brother had given me. The man soon returned and said they wouldn't search me after all. He handed back my watch and ring.



I was held prisoner at Moosberg, Stalag, VII A, about thirty-five kilometers northeast of Munich, Germany, with Ground Force enlisted men and Air Force officer evacuees from several allied nations. I was glad to be with Americans again.

I'd spent much of my childhood in church, and I knew God was real. So, when I faced the enemy, I knew my only option was to call on Him. I didn't deserve his intervention; I hadn't been living for Him. But when I prayed the Twenty-third Psalm, God heard. He guided me safely through the enemy's camp. The Bible says in Psalm 91:14-15, "'Because he loves me,' says the Lord, 'I will rescue him; I will protect him for he acknowledges my name. He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him.'"

On April 29, 1945 at 10:30 P.M., tanks from the American fourteenth Armored Division crashed through double ten-foot barbed wire fences to liberate 110,000 Allied prisoners, including thirty thousand Americans. We were going home because men who risked their lives overpowered the enemy.

But I also knew I was going home because of the grace of God.